



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

San Mateo County

Start Date: January 1, 2023

End Date: October 1, 2024



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH
**AGING & ADULT
SERVICES**





DELIVERABLES:

- **553 DEVICES DISTRIBUTED**
- **4 LEAD PARTNERS**
- **3 REFERRAL PARTNERS**
- **28 DIGITAL NAVIGATORS TRAINED**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background and Problem Statement	4
Workflow	7
Outreach and Recruitment	10
Pre-Training Digital Skills Assessment	10
Devices and Digital Skills Classes	11
Virtual Classes	11
In-Person Classes	12
Service Completion and Ongoing Support	12
Connectivity	13
Results	14
Lessons learned	17
Summary	19
Partners	20

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

San Mateo County, California, is home to people of all backgrounds, with 35.9% of the population being foreign-born and 44.8% speaking a language other than English at home.

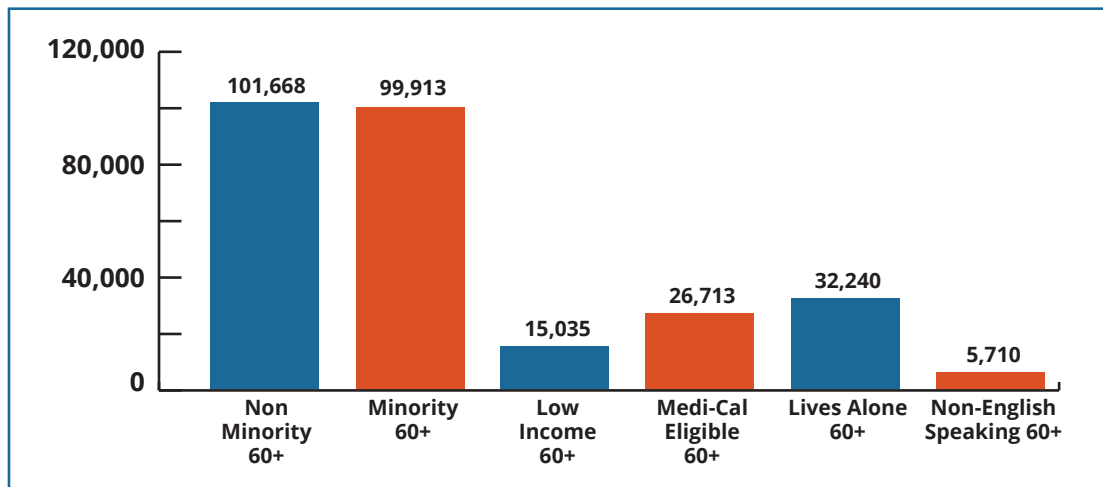
Recent American Community Survey Data (2022) shows that 16.3% of residents identify as Limited English Proficient (LEP) speakers, and include those who speak Spanish (6.71%), Chinese (4.06%), and Tagalog (2.15%).

SAN MATEO COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS¹



TOTAL POPULATION 729,181

Population Age 60+ : 201,581



**Population 75+
65,915**



**Geographically Isolated
3,580**



**Veterans
21,000**

¹From the 2023 California Department of Aging (CDA) Population Demographic Projections by County and PSA for Intrastate Funding Formula (IFF)

However, San Mateo County is a tale of two cities. While it is often considered a county for high-income, affluent households, this is not the case everywhere. In the rural communities of San Mateo County's South Coast, for example, internet access is pretty sparse. Non-English speaking immigrant farmers are particularly affected.

Ophélie Vico, the Community Health Director of Puente, a local nonprofit, says, "Some areas do not have any internet service at all. Many people have never used technology before, and for some of our participants, English is not their first language. It can be a very challenging area to work in...We live in the same county as Silicon Valley, but the connectivity looks very different here."

Yet, the South Coast is not the only area in San Mateo County that faces a digital divide. In numerous communities, including East Palo Alto, many households do not have access to a computer and home internet. Older adults, disabled adults, and folks from marginalized communities (including non-white, low-income, and non-English speaking ones) are the most likely to be offline.

However, since technology is used nowadays for just about everything— from applying to jobs to scheduling doctor's appointments—this lack of connectivity exacerbates already-existing inequalities.

To address this issue, San Mateo County applied for the California Department of Aging's Access to Technology (ATT) grant and received \$1.2 million dollars in funding in order to help older adults (60+) and adults with disabilities (18+) get online. The goal was to reduce participants' isolation, increase

LEARNER'S STORY: LINDA LEUNG

Linda Leung, 79, originally from Hong Kong, immigrated to the United States in 1980. She is a native Cantonese speaker with limited English proficiency.

Has being online helped you feel connected to others?

Being online has made it so much easier to stay connected with my two sons who live far away. It makes me feel more involved and less isolated.

Has learning digital skills brought joy to your life?

Learning digital skills has kept my mind sharp and clear. Whether it's reading news online, watching videos on Youtube, or using the Google Translate app, I feel more engaged and mentally stimulated.

Why were you interested in learning to use technology?

I didn't want to feel left behind. The world is changing so fast, and I wanted to keep up with what's happening around me.

What did you like the most about the program?

I really appreciated the one-one-one, virtual classes because they were tailored just for me. The instructor took the time to understand my pace and answered all my questions without making me feel embarrassed. I didn't feel pressured to keep up with others.

Has being online helped you feel more self-reliant?

With tools like ChatGPT, I can easily find answers to my questions. For example, I can find cooking tips and social service information on my own. Being able to manage tasks by myself, without needing help from others, makes me feel strong and capable. It gives me confidence that I can handle anything that comes my way.

What would you say to someone who has never been online before and might be nervous about using technology?

I'd share how supportive and patient the instructor is. The instructor is there to help, and no question is too small. Being online is easier than they might think.

their social connections, and enhance their self-confidence and self-sufficiency in navigating digital resources. The County partnered with digitalLIFT, a national leader in digital equity, to implement the project.

digitalLIFT is a nonprofit that has been working to bridge the digital divide across California since 2008. It primarily serves older adults and members of marginalized communities and provides them with devices and culturally-appropriate digital skills training (available in multiple languages).

digitalLIFT's classes are often held in public libraries, low-income housing developments, senior centers, schools, and social service agencies. Since 2020, digitalLIFT has also offered remote technology training through its Home Connect program. Additionally, the organization hosts events to offer tech support and help people sign up for low-cost home internet.

Wanting to share its knowledge, digitalLIFT recently developed online courses to support other organizations and individuals as they launch their own digital equity initiatives or improve their already-existing ones. digitalLIFT licenses multilingual technology class curriculum with lesson plans and workbooks as well.





WORKFLOW

To maximize its efforts, digitalLIFT implemented a hybrid service model for the San Mateo Access to Technology project. This approach allowed a larger number of beneficiaries to be reached and included the following two components:

- **Direct Services:** digitalLIFT directly provided technology training and other assistance to 550 older adults and people with disabilities who were referred to the program.
- **Partnerships:** digitalLIFT collaborated with local nonprofits that serve these populations. In addition to receiving client referrals from these organizations, digitalLIFT also trained their staff and volunteers to prepare them to offer technology classes on their own.

Choosing the right partners was crucial to addressing the needs of the County's very ethnically-diverse population that is spread geographically on both sides of the peninsula. digitalLIFT was very methodical in choosing partners that could cover a wide range of cities and populations in

San Mateo County and that offered different infrastructure, talent, and programs. Criteria for partner selection included:

- Nonprofit organizations or government entities that serve older adults and/or adults with disabilities
- Coverage of different geographic areas and demographics in San Mateo County
- Commitment to providing digital access and skills training to their communities
- Dedicated staff to promote and deliver services

digitalLIFT's partner network was divided into two main categories: **Lead Partners** and **Referral Partners**.

LEAD PARTNERS:

Lead partners are organizations with whom digitalLIFT made contractual agreements to achieve specific outputs. Each lead partner was responsible for referring a certain number of community members to digitalLIFT. Each person that they referred would receive a device and virtual technology training through digitalLIFT's Home Connect program. The lead partners were also responsible for hosting in-person classes on their own.

The lead partners for this project were

- [Daly City Partnership](#)
- [Senior Coastsiders](#)
- [Peninsula Family Service](#)
- [Puente de la Costa Sur](#)

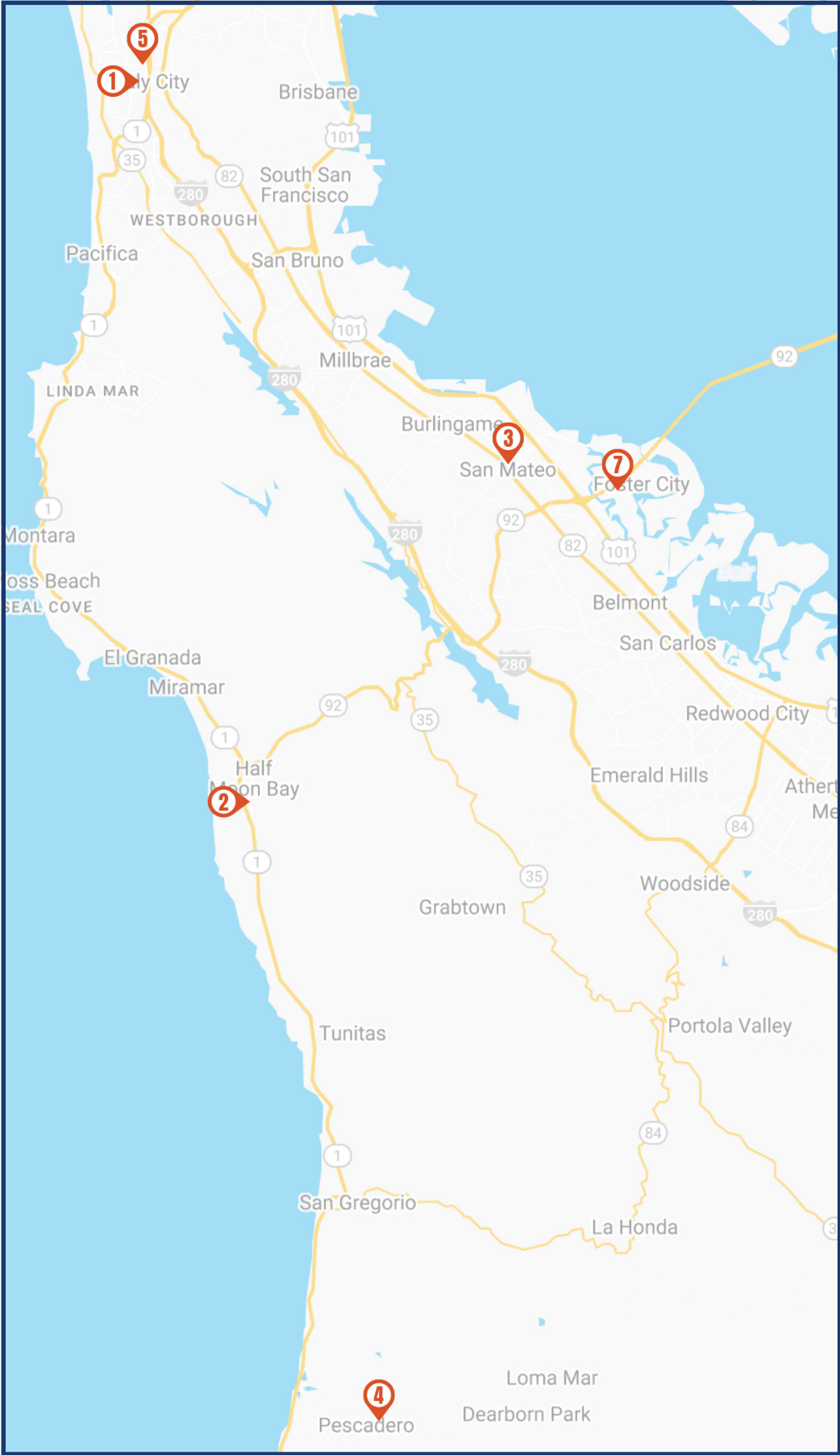
REFERRAL PARTNERS:

Referral partners were agencies who could also refer their learners to digitalLIFT as part of this project but they were not under contractual obligations to refer a set amount of people or to teach classes on their own.

The referral partners for this project were:

- [City of Daly City](#)
- [Coastside Hope](#)
- [Center for Independence of Individuals with Disabilities](#)

THE PARTNER LANDSCAPE IN SAN MATEO COUNTY:



LIST OF PARTNERS

- 1. Daly city Partnership**
725 piece street
Daly City, CA 94015
- 2. Senior Coastsiders**
925 main street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
- 3. Penninsula Family Service**
24 Second Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94401
- 4. Puente de la Coasta Sur**
620 North Street
Pescadero, CA 94060
- 5. City of Daly City**
330 90th Street
Daly City, CA 94015
- 6. Coastside Hope**
248 Main Street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
- 7. Center for Independence of Individuals with Disabilities**
2001 Winward Way
San Mateo, CA 94404

DIRECT SERVICE, VIRTUAL TRAINING WORKFLOW:

The workflow consisted of a coordinated effort between digitalLIFT, the lead and referral partners, KBS Mobility, and the learners to be served.



OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Once the partners were selected, digitalLIFT created promotional flyers, posters, videos, and newsletter articles in English, Spanish, and Chinese so that the organizations could advertise the classes to their community members.

A staff member from each partner organization was listed as the point of contact on the flyers. They would meet with folks who were interested in the program and then refer qualified individuals to digitalLIFT using an online referral form.

PRE-TRAINING DIGITAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Once the partners referred a potential participant, a digitalLIFT instructor would contact the learner directly in their preferred language in order to introduce the program. During this initial phone call, the instructor also conducted a pre-training assessment to gauge the learner's comfort with technology and their skill level, as well as their availability. This information was used to design a unique training plan for the learner, based on their needs and interests.

LEARNER'S STORY: CLEMENT KENNEDY

Clement Kennedy is an 84-year-old from Half Moon Bay, California. She lives alone in a nursing home apartment without a TV. Her instructor, digitalLIFT's Giang (Jen) Tran, says, "Clement was one of the fastest-learning students that I've ever had. ... I believe that having a tablet to watch the news and find entertainment has had a big impact on her well-being and mental health." Below is an excerpt of Jen's interview with Clement.

Has being online helped you feel more self-reliant?

Yes, absolutely. I can contact other people more independently and search for the news and information I need on my own. Also, I can make appointments with my doctor, keep track of my health records, and purchase my prescriptions online.

Has learning digital skills brought joy to your life?

Yes, it has brought me much joy. I can use YouTube to listen to different news sources and to search for movies and music. I can also share videos that I like with other people through email or messages, which also makes me feel a lot more connected with them.

What would you say to someone who has never been online before and might be nervous?

I would tell them to not be scared because the instructors are always here to help. If I make mistakes, I just try again or call you [Jen] for help. You [Jen] were very patient and helpful during the training so I felt really comfortable. I think other learners will feel the same way.

DEVICES AND DIGITAL SKILLS CLASSES

Approved participants received a Galaxy tablet with an activated SIM card, an unlimited data plan for six months, a stylus, and a case. Everything was mailed directly to their home address by KBS Mobility, digitalLIFT's equipment shipping partner. The devices were already configured in the learner's preferred language.

Participants also received a workbook, which included basic instructions and exercises that could be used to follow along with the classes, complete assignments, and practice on their own.

These booklets were available in various languages and were designed by experienced digitalLIFT curriculum specialists to meet different cultural needs. For example, Spanish-speakers often keep in touch with their loved ones through the messaging platform WhatsApp, while Chinese learners are more likely to use an app called WeChat. The workbooks provided tips that were culturally-relevant.

The package with the Learner's Booklet included a welcome letter with the instructor's name and contact information for the learner's convenience.

Each learner was offered:

- Up to five hours of one-on-one, personalized, virtual classes from digitalLIFT in either English, Spanish, or Chinese;
- In-person group classes at the location that referred them; and
- The opportunity to join digitalLIFT's weekly online drop-in Q&A sessions to receive ongoing tech support.

VIRTUAL CLASSES

In the case of virtual learning, digitalLIFT instructors would call each learner over the phone and guide them through the process of turning on AnyDesk, a screen-sharing technology which was pre-installed on all the tablets. AnyDesk allows the trainers to see the learner's screen (without being able to control it). Video conferencing on platforms like Zoom was also an option if learners already had some basic technology skills.

Many learners appreciated the remote format, as they were able to attend the classes from the comfort of their own homes. It also allowed homebound individuals and those who live in very remote, rural areas to still participate.

If a learner missed a class, the digitalLIFT instructor would make up to four attempts to contact them and reschedule. The partner organizations also provided additional support in trying to follow up with folks that they had referred who were unresponsive.



IN-PERSON CLASSES

Since the lead partners also offered in-person group classes on-site, their teams first needed to receive training. Many of them had never taught technology classes before.

digitalLIFT enrolled all of the lead partners' staff and volunteers in its digital navigator program. This capacity-building training provided them with the knowledge and skills to teach technology to adult learners, direct community members towards low-cost home internet options, and provide tech support.

This training allowed digital equity knowledge and resources to stay within the local communities so that organizations on the ground could continue doing digital inclusion work even after the ATT grant period ended. In this way, the project was sustainable in the long-term.

digitalLIFT also gave each organization other supplementary materials, including templates for reporting learner progress and assessing community needs.

ONGOING SUPPORT

During the last lesson, instructors assessed each learner's digital skills in order to measure their progress. Customer satisfaction and program evaluation surveys were also conducted

Once a learner completed their training, they were invited to attend digitalLIFT's virtual Q&A sessions for ongoing tech support. Weekly (Cantonese and Mandarin), biweekly (Spanish), and monthly (English) sessions are provided by digitalLIFT instructors and volunteers.

As the program concluded, digitalLIFT also reached out to partner organizations to confirm whether they would continue to provide additional in-person services and support to the learners. All of the lead partners confirmed that they will continue offering digital skills classes in their communities beyond the program's end date.

CONNECTIVITY

Securing affordable home internet for community members was one of the program's primary goals. Asking the partners' clients about their internet access helped identify candidates for the Access to Technology program and added another opportunity for engagement.

digitalLIFT provided six months of complimentary data plans for ATT learners while also assisting participants in finding affordable home internet services, ensuring continued access to their devices beyond the initial period.

digitalLIFT instructors informed learners of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which was a federally-funded program that offered eligible, low-income households discounts on their monthly internet bills. The instructors were also available to guide participants through the ACP application process.

Once the ACP ended, instructors helped participants find and determine their eligibility for alternative low-cost home internet options.

Get the professionally-built training and curriculum you need to build or expand a digital literacy ecosystem in your county, by visiting digitalLIFT.org/counties-program/ today!

LEARNER'S STORY: ALICE HO

Alice Ho, 70, originally from Hong Kong, is a native Cantonese speaker with a conversational level of English.

Has being online helped you feel connected to others?
Getting online, especially using Facebook, has made it so much easier to reconnect with old friends. I've found people I hadn't spoken to in years, and it's been wonderful catching up with them. It makes me feel much more connected and involved in their lives.

Has being online helped you feel more self-reliant?
Yes, getting online has definitely helped me feel more self-reliant and independent. After learning to use ChatGPT and search for information online, I can find answers to my questions quickly and easily without needing to ask others for help. I feel much more confident and in control and capable of handling things on my own.

Is it easier to apply for and manage public benefits now that you're online?

Yes, it's definitely easier now because I can access government websites for information without waiting on the phone. It saves me time and effort.

Has learning digital skills brought joy to your life?
With digital skills, I can easily access information on any topic that interests me. For example, I can find online exercise courses and read Bible stories.

What did you like the most about the program?
I really appreciated the one-on-one virtual training, and I'm so thankful for my patient instructor. She guided me step-by-step through everything, making the learning process so much easier.

What would you say to someone who has never been online before and might be nervous about using technology?

The world is changing and we need to upgrade ourselves. It's a chance to grow, learn, and stay connected with others.

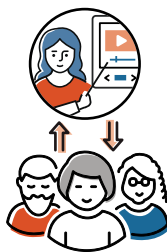


RESULTS

OUTPUTS



**Outreach: About
10,000 potential
learners²**



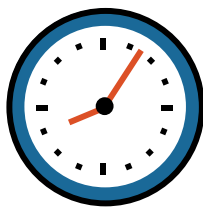
**Total referrals to
digitalLIFT: 611**



**tablets distributed by
digitalLIFT to
learners: 553⁵**



**Total number
of learners
served: 5,360³**



**Total training hours:
9,204 hours⁴
Total number of**



**ACP enrollment:
72 learners**

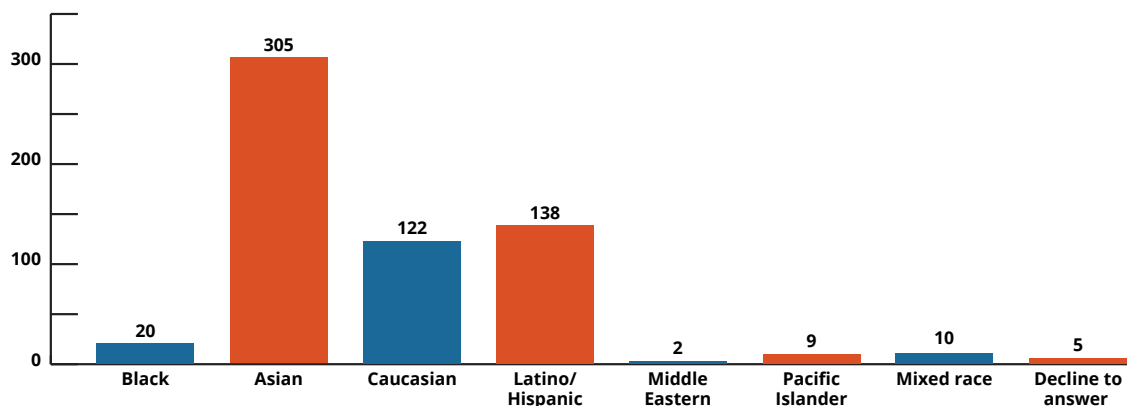
² This is an estimate of the potential participants in San Mateo County who learned about the program through newsletters, social media announcements, in-person events, door-to-door efforts, flyers, etc.

³ Number of people who received technology training from either digitalLIFT and/or a partner organization as part of this program

⁴ Including both virtual training by digitalLIFT instructors and in-person classes from partner organizations

⁵ Some of the 611 people who were referred to the program eventually withdrew. Some were unresponsive to the digitalLIFT instructors' attempts to contact them, and others decided they no longer needed a device.

Ethnicity of learners referred to the program:

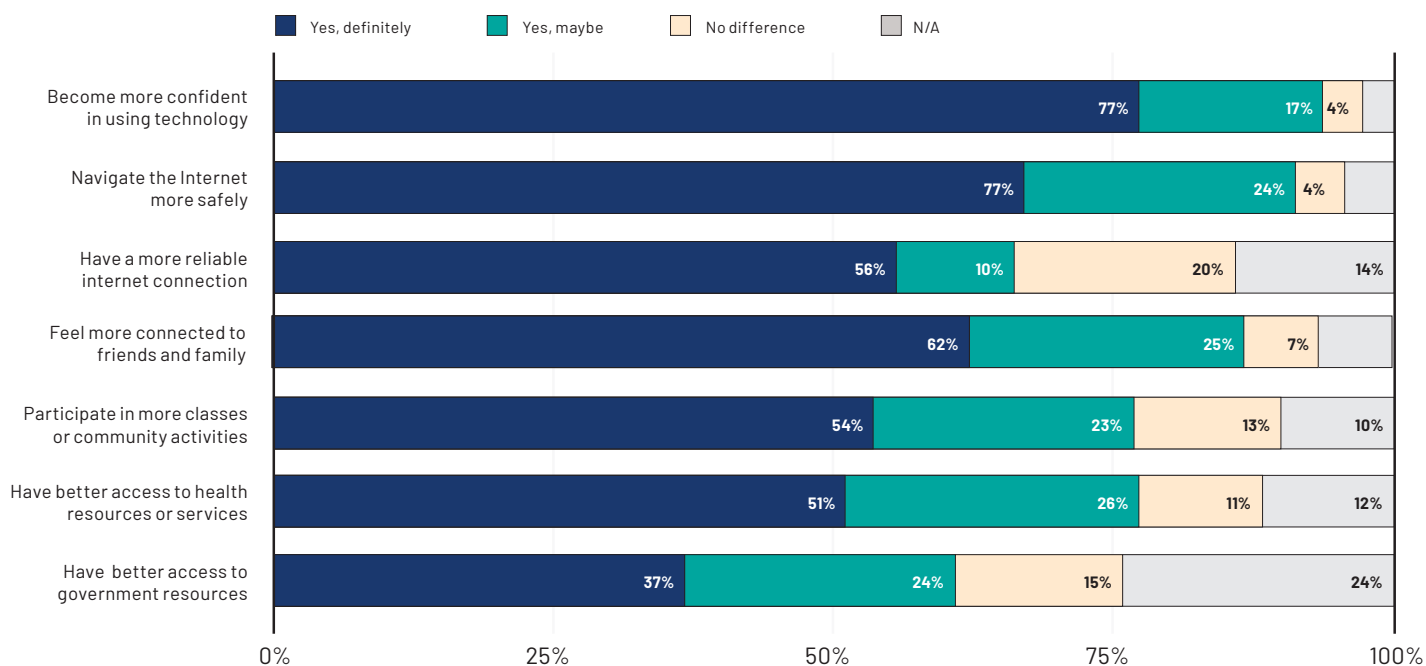


Staff and volunteers trained by digitalLIFT:



**28 individuals from
6 organizations⁶**

HAS THE PROGRAM ENABLED YOU TO... ?



⁶ One of the seven partners, the Center of Independence for Individuals with Disabilities, opted not to have their staff participate in digitalLIFT's capacity-building training. As a referral partner, they had no contractual obligation to complete it.

CASE STUDY:

Senior Coastsiders is a nonprofit organization located in the Half Moon Bay area of San Mateo County. Its mission is to support successful aging for Coastside seniors by providing opportunities, services, and resources to enrich their lives and foster independence.

Some of the programs that it offers include: free meals, care management, home repairs, classes and group activities, transport services, and more.

When Senior Coastsiders first joined as one of the lead partners on this project, they did not have the infrastructure to teach technology classes to their community members. Their team just provided one-on-one sessions to offer tech support and answer older adults' questions about their personal devices.

Sandi Winter, however, Senior Coastsiders Executive Director, fully believed in the power of digital skills. Thus, she hired a technology teacher, Wanda Bowles. Winter also upgraded Senior Coastsiders' computer equipment and provided a space to conduct classes.

With the right staff and infrastructure in place, Senior Coastsiders began offering weekly Android & iOS Essentials classes in English, Mandarin and Spanish⁷. They also hosted special workshops on topics such as Zoom, FaceTime, online shopping and banking, telehealth, WhatsApp, photos, file management, Windows, artificial intelligence and Google Mail. Meanwhile, they continued to offer one-on-one tech support.

Senior Coastsiders collaborated with digitalLIFT and the county of San Mateo to present the lessons learned from this project at the CENIC Right Connection conference in March 2024.

As a result of this work, the Senior Coastsider team accomplished the following:

- Learners referred to digitalLIFT to receive a tablet and virtual training: 105
- Number of learners trained in-person by SC staff: 1,095

Here's what some of the learners from Senior Coastsiders had to say about the program:

- "Using the digital app at Safeway saved me \$30 on my grocery bill."
- "Your classes have enriched my life and I have learned so much!"
- "I can now learn using YouTube! I didn't know about all of the topics that are available."
- "Learning how to organize my email into folders and delete spam has been great!"

⁷ Senior Coastsiders partnered with the Half Moon Bay Library to provide the classes in Spanish.



LESSONS LEARNED

FROM A PARTNER PERSPECTIVE:

- Hire dedicated staff to set up classrooms, advertise training, schedule sessions, and follow-up with potential learners.
- Providing and funding a comfortable space that is equipped with the right tools (such as computers, tablets, a white board, etc.) is crucial to conducting successful classes.
- Repeating key topics multiple times aids retention, especially for older adult learners.
- Recruiting volunteers allows the organization to expand training sessions to more locations and in more languages, reaching beyond what full-time staff can manage.
- One-on-one in-person training and small classroom environments had the most impact.

FROM digitalLIFT PERSPECTIVE AS A LEAD FOR THE GRANT:

- Choose partners with a committed executive director or program director who can ensure the program's success by investing in the right tools and supporting the staff members who will run the program.

- Select partner organizations that have a solid reach and have developed trust with their community.
- Allow time in the grant execution to build out infrastructure and conduct proper needs assessments.
- Build for the future: develop services and partnerships that continue beyond the grant timeline.

FROM A COUNTY PERSPECTIVE:

- Establish invoicing and reporting processes with the county's fiscal team to ensure that expense and data tracking requirements are met.
- Implementing the program within the given timeline was challenging, and unexpected changes to the grant period and funding required last-minute adjustments to extend the work. To avoid these challenges, it is recommended to allocate time at the start of the grant to review the project's scope and confirm that the timeline and funding align with expectations and targeted outcomes.





SUMMARY

Working with San Mateo County on the ATT grant provided invaluable insights into the technological needs of some of the most vulnerable residents in the area. Through this collaboration, we were able not only to serve these community members directly but also to establish sustainable programs and resources that will continue supporting them long after the grant period.

Our work highlighted a critical gap: while many nonprofit organizations in San Mateo County support seniors and adults with disabilities, most lack the resources and expertise to deliver digital literacy training on a large scale. Together, we formed a partnership that brought essential digital skills training to those that need it most, empowering them with tools they need for everyday life in the 21st century.

The impact of this program is best reflected in the testimonials, survey results, and feedback from the learners themselves. Their stories illustrate how gaining secure access to the internet has positively transformed their lives, opening up new opportunities and connections.



PARTNERS



Coastside Hope
Neighbors Helping Neighbors



CENTER FOR
INDEPENDENCE
of Individuals with Disabilities
Serving San Mateo County



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

San Mateo County

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